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Now, a Newsletter for 'Intelligencers

By PHILIP TAUBMAN
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 27 — Thomas F. Troy scoffed at the idea that he had achieved his life's ambition. But it seemed that he had as he sat in the basement of his home, surrounded by books and papers, talking about the reason he started one of Washington's newest and most unusual newsletters, "Foreign Intelligence Literary Scene."

"In many ways this is a book lover's operation," he said. "It's surprising how many people are researching and writing about intelligence these days. I thought they needed a way of keeping track of the literature."

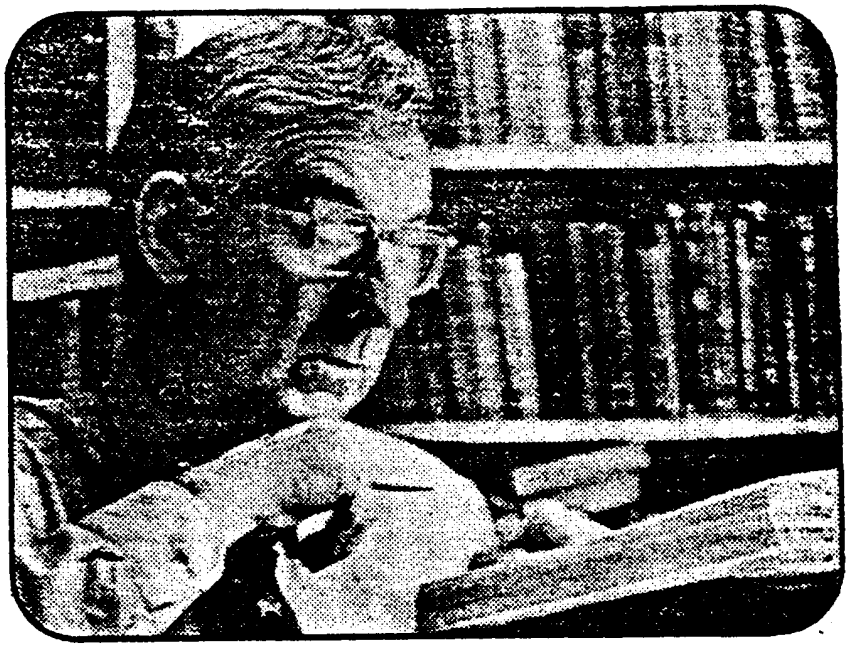
Mr. Troy, who retired from the Central Intelligence Agency last year after a 30-year career as an analyst, has provided the way with a modest but informative 12-page newsletter that appears six times a year for an annual subscription price of $25. By the standards of Washington's countless newsletters, many produced by special interest groups trying to rally support for their cause, Mr. Troy's publication has a refreshingly scholarly, nonpartisan tone.

Explanation of Origin

The inaugural issue, which appeared last February, included a four-page bibliography of 95 recently published books about the intelligence business, several pages of book reviews, some brief accounts of magazine articles about intelligence and the following explanation of the origin of the newsletter:

"No longer primarily espionage, no longer the sometime spying of generally disreputable and disowned opportunists in the service of wily princes, intelligence has slowly emerged as a distinct, varied, overt, sophisticated and permanent field of human and political knowledge and activity.

"A consequence of the transformation or emergence of modern foreign intelligence is a corresponding transformation of the literature of intelligence. No longer simply an occasional purloined letter or a highly unreliable 'I Was a Spy' story, or a devitalized government account of its military or naval intelligence service — although all of these show no sign of dying out! — the literature of intelligence has today become a much larger, richer, more informative, even scholarly and certainly more varied body of writings than one would have envisioned a few decades ago.



The New York Times / George Tames

Thomas F. Troy working at his home in Bethesda, Md.

"This requires a literary vehicle wherein 'intelligencers' can openly read, write and talk about intelligence."

Subsequent issues of the newsletter have included not only book lists and reviews but also a smattering of news about the intelligence profession and several features about book collectors who have accumulated thousands of volumes about the history and art of spying.

Mr. Troy uses the basement of his home in Bethesda, Md., as the newsletter's editorial office and sometimes calls on his daughter Margaret to handle typing chores. Libraries serve as his main source of information.

Mr. Troy's transformation from C.I.A. analyst to author and publisher began more than 10 years ago when he wrote a classified history about William J. Donovan, the head of the Office of Strategic Services in World War II, and the establishment of the C.I.A. The book, entitled "Donovan and the C.I.A.," was declassified last year; hard-cover copies were published by Aletheia Books, a subsidiary of University Publications of America.

Mr. Troy, who is 63 years old, received a master's degree in political philosophy from Fordham University before enlisting in the C.I.A. in 1951.

His initial plan after retiring was to start a book club specializing in volumes about intelligence. And although that idea was overtaken by the newsletter, Mr. Troy has not abandoned it. With help from the publishers of his book, who also underwrite the newsletter, Mr. Troy plans to start the book club next year.

Mr. Troy writes in the glow of a table lamp that struggles to supplement the dim daylight reaching the small wooden table that serves as his desk. "I find writing difficult," he said. "Why I crucify myself I don't know."

He laughed, and added, "I hate golf."